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(DCI, copy)

21 April 1975

DCI BRIEFING FOR  
21 APRIL WSAG MEETING

VIETNAM

- I. President Thieu announced his resignation this morning to the legislature and the Supreme Court. His announcement was timed to occur after local press deadlines in order to minimize any panic effect in Saigon. *anti US & HAK -*
- A. Following conversations with the French ambassador and Ambassador Martin, Thieu decided to scrap the speech in which he intended to announce his decision to stay on.
1. He told his closest advisors that the military situation was hopeless and that his continued presence in office could conceivably be a block to a resolution of the conflict.
- B. Vice President Huong has assumed the presidency, but he will quickly step aside in favor of Senate President Tran Van Lam. This action will maintain the legality of the follow-on government, because the procedures for a transfer of power are in accordance with the constitution.

Lam will form a new cabinet, with full

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powers to reach a settlement with the Communists.

2. There apparently has been no decision on who will head the new cabinet. General "Big" Minh, who would probably be acceptable to the Communists as a negotiating partner, is a likely choice.

II. At this point the best such a new government can probably obtain would be a negotiated surrender under the guise of a "political solution." But unless the Communists halt their military advance in the next day or so, a collapse of South Vietnamese will and GVN authority could make even this kind of orderly transfer of power impossible.

- A. In recent weeks the Communists appear to have virtually ruled out any real compromise settlement or a coalition government of any substance. Authoritative PRG and North Vietnamese public statements have carefully backed away from the earlier position that negotiations and full implementation of the Paris Accords could quickly follow the removal of President Thieu. Now they are avoiding any mention

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of negotiations with either the present government or a reconstituted one without Thieu.

1. In a public statement Saturday the PRG spokesman in Saigon continued to take this non-committal line. He merely reiterated the PRG statement of March 21, which called for Thieu's removal and the suspension of all US support for the GVN as preconditions for "a rapid settlement" of South Vietnam's affairs.

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eriment.

III. On the military front, the government's position continues to deteriorate.

- A. East of the capital, Communist troops quickly occupied Xuan Loc following the government's withdrawal from the town on Sunday.
- B. North Vietnamese troops captured Ham Tan, the

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capital of Binh Tuy Province, after only a few hours of fighting today.

- C. Communist forces are expected to converge on Vung Tau, and attacks could begin today or tomorrow.
- D. Northwest of Saigon, Tay Ninh City remains isolated with Route 22 cut in several places.
  - 1. The South Vietnamese still have one regiment of the 25th Division and some rangers in the city, but they probably can hold out for only a day or so if attacked.
- E. In the northern delta, Communist forces skirmished with government troops in Long An and Dinh Tuong provinces, but they appear to be still in the process of repositioning and preparing for the next round of fighting.
- F. In the Can Tho area, the Communist 4th Division shows signs of moving back toward the city, and this could keep the South Vietnamese 21st Division tied down so that it cannot be shifted to the northern delta.

IV. Recent reporting indicates the North Vietnamese have moved a few of their three dozen gunboats

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south, and these boats could pose a threat to evacuation by sea.

A. Soon after the fall of Da Nang, two North Vietnamese gunboats were detected moving south to the Cua Viet River just below the Demilitarized Zone.

1. Photography of April 17 also shows a gunboat near Tuy Hoa on the central coast.

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other North Vietnamese gunboats are operating off the coast near Binh Tuy Province.

2. None of these gunboats are the Soviet built KOMARS, of which North Vietnam has three. (The KOMAR carries two guided missiles which have a range of 22 nautical miles and are highly effective against ships.) The gunboats now operating off the South Vietnamese coast, however, carry only torpedoes and machine guns.

V. As we mentioned two days ago, there is some evidence that North Vietnam may use aircraft in its final assault on Saigon. Here are a few facts which spell

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out the magnitude of this possible threat.

- A. Hanoi has 71 MIG 21s, 79 MIG-19s, and 112 MIG-15/17s -- a total of 262 jet fighters. Forty of these are stationed south of the 20th parallel.
- B. North Vietnamese helicopters have been using former South Vietnamese airfields as far south as the central highlands. A number of these airfields could accommodate MIGs.
- C. From these airfields, the MIGs could attack targets in MR 3, including Saigon.
- D. There are no logistic problems -- not even the obtaining of jet fuel -- that could not be overcome.
- E. Since MIG aircraft can carry only a small bomb load, such attacks would do little physical damage, but could have a dramatic psychological impact.

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